

Department of Virginia
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Program Action Plan
2018-2019

*Serving Veterans of Yesterday, Today and
Tomorrow*



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Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

What is this program and why do we do it?

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of U.S. Veterans, the military and their families. The VA&R program continues to address the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan goals through working our mission in the following ways:

- It provides our members opportunities to serve in volunteer leadership roles within their Veterans Administration Medical Centers.
- It broadens our membership pool among a target population.
- It serves to build brand loyalty with the public and with Veterans themselves.

Focus for 2018-2019

American Legion Auxiliary National President Kathy Dungan has a dual focus for all programs this year, giving attention to two main issues, Veteran Homelessness and Women Who Have Served.

What can you do?

1. Assist in activities that help homeless Veterans.

- Contact the Legion's Homeless Veteran Coordinator for the Department of Virginia to determine how you and your Unit can assist with requests for assistance from veterans themselves or from homeless veteran service providers. Ask about any needs specific to women.
- Knit or crochet hats, scarves and mittens to be distributed to homeless veterans. If you don't knit or crochet, you can collect and donate new or gently used gloves, mittens, scarves and hats. Consider creating a "Tree of Warmth" in a location frequented by homeless veterans and attaching these items with a message to "Please Take if Needed" or something similar.
- Contact the Homeless Veteran Coordinator at the Veterans Administration Medical Center nearest you to find out how you can assist homeless veterans in your community.
- Participate in VA Project CHALENG, organized by the Veterans Administration Healthcare System to enhance care for homeless veterans through the VA and surrounding community service agencies.
- Connect with your Post and Squadron counterparts to explore how you can work most effectively as a Legion Family with raising funds for the Family Support Network to assist veterans and their families who are at risk of losing their housing.

- Host or participate in a Stand Down event where homeless veterans receive free goods and services. Be sure to include items specific to women.
- Contact homeless veteran emergency shelters and transitional and permanent housing services in your area to identify how you can assist through donations such as clothing, hygiene kits, buddy baskets, household items, or volunteering time for meal preparation and serving, or distribution of donated goods.
- "Adopt" an identified veteran who is at-risk; make a personal connection to provide practical, social and moral support.
- Compile "blessings bags" with personal items to be distributed by local police departments or other organizations that encounter homeless veterans.
- Share information from bulletins, e-bulletins, and mailings with all unit members.

2. Support rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts, and hobbies. *National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF)*

NVCAF is the national, annual competition and festival that recognizes the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability or life crisis. As the national presenting sponsor, the American Legion Auxiliary should strive to increase monetary support by encouraging departments to sponsor fundraisers that will contribute to the increased awareness and support of this program.

- Familiarize yourself with the *ALA Guide for Volunteers* available to download from www.alaforveterans.org under Member Resources, ALA Guides.
- Raise member awareness of the ALA's vital role as the presenting sponsoring of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.
- Help your units and department earn recognition at National Convention through donations to support VA Creative Arts Festivals. Your unit may introduce a project of its own, or explore veteran arts, crafts and hobbies project already operational in your community.
- Collect and contribute supplies to help supplement veteran artists' needs for their projects.
- Raise funds to help local veterans attend and compete in Wheelchair Games, Veterans Creative Arts Festivals, Paralympics or other similar events.
- Attend Creative Arts Festivals, consider volunteering and recruit other volunteers.

- Apply for a grant from the ALA Foundation to assist your local VA to prepare for and conduct a local Creative Arts Festival.
 - Advocate for poetry, art and music therapy, and drama and recreational therapy programs in VA Healthcare facilities.
- 3. Help the American Legion, State Department of Veterans Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for veterans and their families.**
- Participate in a veteran job fair by co-hosting an information table at a job fair with the Legion Family. See if this is right for you, and learn how at www.hiringourheroes.org
 - Serve as a career mentor for women veterans. Learn how at www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor/
- 4. Enroll ALA members as VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) volunteers at VA healthcare facilities.**
- If you live near a VAMC, become a regular VAVS volunteer.
 - Provide supplies and support to those who volunteer regularly. Contact your VAVS representatives to determine specific needs, which may vary by location.
 - Donate funds to purchase coupon books for Bingo or other competitive game events.
 - Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tracking system. This is a separate tracking system from the means of reporting hours for ALA hours bars.
 - Keep track of all time, monetary and other donations for mid-year, annual and impact reporting.
- 5. If there is not a VAMC close to you, find other opportunities to serve veterans.**
- Coordinate and collaborate with local agencies that assist homeless veterans.
 - Participate in the *Quilts of Valor* project. Visit the *Quilts of Valor Foundation* website at www.qovf.org/ for information about how you can contribute.
 - Supply postage and phone cards for veterans in rest homes or assisted living facilities, and to homeless veterans.
 - Provide or organize transportation for veterans to assist them with errands and to medical appointments.
 - Contact your Post Service Officer to determine how you and your unit can contribute to requests for assistance.
 - Track and report your Service to Veterans hours to your Unit VA&R chairman.

6. Transitioning back to civilian life is one of the biggest challenges veterans face today. Educate yourself about resources so you can help veterans access all of their VA benefits, not just healthcare related benefits. Work with your American Legion Post Service Officer.

- Connect eligible veterans with service officers to attain benefits.
- Encourage eligible veterans to use the VA healthcare system and its services, including hospitals. Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), and Vet Centers.
- Invite the Post or Department Service Officer to speak at a Unit meeting.
- *Resources:*
VA Health Care Hotline for women veterans 1-855-VA-WOMEN
US Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care enrollment
www.explore.va.gov/health-care

7. Assist and support caregivers of veterans.

- Familiarize yourself with the service of the VA Caregiver Support program at www.caregiver.va.gov/
- Learn about the Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network at www.milvetcaregivernetwork.org
- Learn how to become a caregiver support volunteer.
- Invite the VA caregiver support coordinator in the VA health care system nearest you to speak at a meeting or event to learn more about how you can help.
- Learn about the Elizabeth Dole Foundation for caregivers at www.elizabethdolefoundation.org

Department Special Project

Assist and support caregivers of military and veterans through the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Hidden Heroes Cities program. The program raises awareness, provides a peer support network, and provides caregivers access to a national registry to help connect to organization and agency services, indexed by location. Further, this can provide a connection to the Legion Family and its many resources. Request that your city or county pass a resolution or proclamation to become a Hidden Heroes City. Learn more about Hidden Heroes at <https://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org/hidden-heroes/> Contact me at lisachaplin@lexacom.net for the Resolution Template.

In addition to enhancing services to veterans and their caregivers, this can directly address two of our organization's strategic plan goals: raise awareness to build brand loyalty (goal 5), and the potential to enhance membership strength (goal 1).

VA&R Reporting

This program is one of the Four Pillars of the American Legion and is of critical importance to delivery of our organization's mission to enhance the lives of veterans, the military, and their families.

In your reports, please remember to include hours spent, monetary donations and approximate value of items donated as these figures contribute to the ALA's *Annual Impact Report ~ ALA by the Numbers*, for the American Legion to submit to Congress, sharing our impact with the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the media and the public.

Taking the time to share a favorite story about the positive impact your unit has had on our mission through the VA&R program is worth doing. It helps demonstrate who we are, what we do and why we matter. As part of your reports, include a narrative that addresses any or all of the following:

- What did your Unit do to address issues faced by women who have served?
- How did your Unit address veteran homelessness or assist those at risk for homelessness?
- How did your Unit participate in the caregiver support program?
- Describe any exceptional efforts members made through their Service to Veterans hours.
- Did your Unit provide any assistance at a stand down? If so, please describe how.
- Describe any other outstanding participation in the VA&R program mission delivery.

Mid-year Reports

Mid-year reports reflect the program work of units in the department and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. Each Unit VA&R Chairman is required to submit a report to the Department VA&R Chairman by December 15, 2018.

Year-end Reports

Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department and may result in a national award for participants if award requirements are met. Each Unit VA&R Chairman is required to submit a report to the Department VA&R Chairman by April 15, 2019.

VA&R Award Deadlines and Submission Requirements for National Awards

1. Service to Veterans

- **Member Award: Hour Bar Recognitions for Service to Veterans Volunteers**
 - Award: Hour Bar
 - Presented to members by the Department via National Headquarters
 - Guidelines:
 - Volunteers are recognized when specific hour milestones are reached: 50, 100, 300, 500 and 1,000 hours.
 - After the first 1,000 hour bar is awarded, the following bars will be awarded in 1,000 hour increments up to 20,000 hours. Hour bars are also awarded in increments of 25,000 and 30,000 hours. After achieving 35,000 hours, ALA Headquarters will issue a separate Lifetime Service to Veterans pin.
- **Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit VA&R Program**
 - Award: Citation Plaque
 - Presented to one Unit in each of the five divisions, announced by the National VA&R Committee at the pre-convention meeting.
 - Guidelines: The entry must be typewritten in a narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words. Include pictures, clippings, or other documents to demonstrate your Unit's activities and accomplishments.
- **Department Award: Best Department VA&R Program**
 - Award: Citation
 - Presented to one Department in each of the five divisions, announced by the National VA&R Committee at the pre-convention meeting.
 - Guidelines: The entry must be typewritten in a narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words. Pictures, clippings, or other documents to demonstrate our Department's activities and accomplishments are required.
 - **Note:** *Application for this award is submitted by the department VA&R chairman along with the department year-end report which is compiled from Unit Reports. Remember that the more units that report with supporting documentation, the better the chance of earning this award.*

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2. National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) support recognition

- Award: Recognition during VA&R Chairman's remarks at the ALA National Convention.
- Presented to Departments, Units and individual members who qualify according to the following contribution levels to NVCAF from August 1, 2018 through July 31, 2019:
 - Bronze: \$1,000-\$2,499
 - Silver: \$2,500-\$4,999
 - Gold: \$5,000-\$14,999
 - Donations must be sent to the ALA Foundation at National Headquarters, earmarked NVCAF. National Headquarters will then submit qualifying donations to NVCAF staff in August of 2019.

3. Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)

- **National Award: VAVS Volunteer of the Year Award/ALA National Advisory Committee Nominee**
 - Award: Citation plus \$500 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of recipient's choice.
 - Citation presented to member, and donation presented by the ALA.
 - Guidelines:
 - Candidates for VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) Volunteer of the Year must be submitted by the chiefs of voluntary service to the National VAVS deputy.
 - Awarded to the nominee who has given extraordinary service to our nation's veterans through the VA&R program and the VAVS program.
 - The nominee must serve in an established VA assignment and be defined as a regularly scheduled volunteer.
 - The nominee should be actively involved in working with veterans in any one of the following areas: outpatient clinics, nursing homes, homeless veteran programs, served as host for veteran-related functions outside the VA or visited veterans confined to their homes *as assigned by VAVS*.
 - The ALA selects the Volunteer of the Year, and the name is forwarded for consideration as the NAC Volunteer of the Year.
- **Member Award: 10,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award**
 - Award: Citation plus \$100 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of recipient's choice.
 - Citation presented to member, and donation presented by the ALA.
 - Guidelines:

- Given to volunteers who have reached 10,000 hours of service in a VA facility from April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019.
 - Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by June 7, 2019.
 - **Member Award: 20,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award**
 - Award: Citation plus \$200 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of recipient's choice.
 - Citation presented to member, and donation presented by the ALA.
 - Guidelines:
 - Given to volunteers who have reached 20,000 hours of service in a VA facility from April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019.
 - Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by June 7, 2019.
 - **Individual Recognition Award: Volunteer Recruitment and Service Department**
 - Award: Citation presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs
 - Presented to Hospital Representative
 - Guidelines:
 - No entry form is required.
 - An "Attendance Card" will be awarded to each representative and deputy who has 100 percent attendance to VAVS committee meetings at her assigned facility.
 - The National VAVS representative will verify the winners from Veterans Administration records.
4. **Department Recognition from the American Legion Award:**
 Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach
Please note that this is not an ALA award; it must be submitted to the American Legion.
- Award: Plaque presented by The American Legion Commander at the National Convention.
 - This award is given to The American Legion Department that demonstrated American Legion Family involvement in homeless veteran initiatives that show outstanding support for activity in any or all of the following areas: volunteerism, prevention, supportive housing, advocacy, and fundraising.
 - The require nomination form is available at www.legion.org
 - Submission deadline: January 15, 2019.
 - Entries must be approved by the Department Adjutant and sent to The American Legion Headquarters.

5. James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship

- This substantial scholarship is awarded annually by Veterans Affairs to a student volunteer.
- The ALA contributes \$2,000 each year to this scholarship fund.
- To be eligible, candidates must meet the following criteria:
 - Must have completed 100 hours of regularly scheduled VAVS volunteer service during the calendar year prior to September 1, 2019.
 - Must be a student in the 10th grade or above.
 - Must not have reached their 19th birthday.
- The VAMC Director nominates a candidate for the award by submission of the nomination to the president of the fund by November 1 of each year. *Late nominations will not be considered.*
- The nomination form should be completed to reflect the volunteer service and background of the candidate and include age, years of volunteering, number of volunteer hours, areas of service, and affiliated/supporting organizations as applicable. See www.va.gov for more information under VAVS, James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship.
- The national winner receives a plaque and letter of commitment, presented at the Annual Meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee.
- Deadline: November 1 every year, unless otherwise specified.
- Note: *Share this information now to potential applicants for the September 1, 2018 through September 1, 2019 volunteer service period, for submission November 2019. This will allow time for required processes that must precede designation as a regularly scheduled volunteer.*

Refer to the 2018-2019 Annual Supplement to the Programs Action Plan for ALA award submission forms. Forms must be completed in full with accompanying documents included in order to be considered.

Additional Information

- Welcome Home Celebrations
 - Provide assistance to your local VA healthcare system in supporting returning servicemembers and their families in your community. The VA supports this initiative by providing information about opportunities available to them through the VA. Every VA healthcare system sponsors Welcome Home celebrations in their facilities and communities.
 - Contact your nearest VAMC to find out how you can become involved.

- National Salute to Veterans
 - This initiative, occurring during the week of February 14th each year, salutes America's heroes, the more than 98,000 veterans of the US Armed Services who are cared for every day in VA Medical Centers.
 - Start planning now for how you can become involved in honoring these heroes.

- Wreaths Across America
 - Wreaths Across America Day is December 15, 2018.
 - You can participate as a volunteer, or you can sponsor one or more wreaths individually or as a Unit project.
 - Visit the website at www.wreathscrossamerica.org

Online Resources at a glance

- Homeless Veterans Coalition: www.nchv.org
- "How to" sheets available at www.ALAforveterans.org
 Log in using your name and password. If it is your first time, use the membership number on your membership card as your password. You can change that later to something easier to remember.
 Select *Members Only*, then *Member Resources*, then from the left column, select *Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee*
 On that page you will find much useful information, including:
 - How to Raise Awareness for Homeless Veterans
 - How to e-Mentor Women Veterans and Military and Veteran Spouses
 - How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military and Veteran Spouses
 - How to Volunteer with VAVS and How to Recruit for the VA&R VAVS
 - How to facilitate a Local Veterans Creative Arts Festival
 - And many others!
- Quilts of Valor Foundation: www.qovf.org
- VA Homeless Programs: www.va.gov/homeless/
- HUD Homeless Assistance Programs: www.hudexchange.info/resources
- On-Call: Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers: www.legion.org/publications/168493/homeless-veterans-handbook
- The American Legion Family Support Network: www.legion.org/familysupport
- American Legion Auxiliary Veterans Creative Activities Action Guide: www.ALAforVeterans.org
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov
- The National VA&R Committee Facebook group, search ALA Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) and ask to join the group.
- The Department VA&R Committee members.

**American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Virginia
2018-2019 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Year-End Report**

When completed, submit the Unit VA & R Mid-year Report, post-marked or email time-stamped on or before December 15, 2018 to the Department Chairman.

Department Chairman Name: Dr. Lisa Chaplin, DNP
Department Chairman Mailing Address: 86 12 Den Bark Drive North Chesterfield, VA 23235
Email Address: lisachaplin@lexacom.net

Do not include dollars and hours as they will be reported on the Unit End of Year Consolidated Impact Report

Unit Name & Number: _____ Zone: _____ District: _____
Unit Chairman's Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
Email Address: _____

1. Describe how your Unit assisted in activities that helped homeless Veterans.

2. Describe how your Unit assisted in supporting rehabilitation and healing through arts, crafts, and hobbies.

3. Describe how your Unit helped the American Legion, State of Department of Veterans Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for Veterans and their families.

4. Did any of your members enroll as VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Volunteers at VA health care facilities? Please describe their roles and responsibilities.

5. If there is not a VA hospital close to your community, what opportunities did your members find to serve Veterans in your area?

6. How did your Unit work with the American Legion Post Service Officer to assist in Veterans transitioning back to civilian life?

7. How did your unit assist and support caregivers of veterans?

Narrative Rules for Award Judging (Department Award & Convention Award)

1. As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

- a. How did the units participate in the caregiver support program?
- b. Describe any exceptional efforts members made in earning their Service to Veterans hours.
- c. What assistance did units give at a stand down in your department? What did units learn about hosting a stand down? What went well; what would they do differently?

2. Narrative must be typed not to exceed 1,000 words. Include pictures, news articles, news releases, etc.

3. Completed National Report & Awards Cover Sheet, a copy of the Unit Year-End Consolidated Impact Report, narrative, and this report must be included to be considered for award judging.

